

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 AID-10 NSC-07 NSCE-00 CIAE-00

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PFOR, MILI

SUBJECT: CHILEANS PRESS FOR USG RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR
ARMS ASSISTANCE

REF: SANTIAGO 4707; COMUSMILGP/CHILE 291605Z AUG 74

1. SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM REPORTS INCREASING CHILEAN ANXIETY AT HIGHEST LEVELS OVER OUR FAILURE TO RESPOND TO GOC REQUESTS TO PURCHASE TOW ANTI-TANK WEAPON, M-48 TANKS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT. WE CONSIDER THAT SUPPLY OF THIS MATERIEL IS IN US NATIONAL INTEREST. IT WILL BUILD UP CHILE'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY AND THUS HELP TO DETER A LONG-CONTEMPLATED PERUVIAN MILITARY ADVENTURE. WHILE IT WILL HAVE LITTLE OR NO EFFECT ON CHILEAN INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION, IT WILL SERVE TO SUPPORT PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE HEMISPHERE, TO THE ULTIMATE ADVANTAGE OF ALL CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

2. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, GEN. GEORGE MABRY, USA, COMUSARSO, IS CURRENTLY IN CHILE ON ROUTINE OFFICIAL
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VISIT. MORNING SEPT 23 HE HAD MEETINGS WITH DEFENSE

MINISTER GEN. OSCAR BONILLA AND PRES. PINOCHET,
AND WAS GUEST OF LATTER AT LUNCH.

3. WHAT CAME THROUGH MOST CLEARLY IN THESE MEETINGS,
WHICH WERE ATTENDED BY NUMBER OF TOP CHILEAN ARMY
OFFICERS, WAS INCREASING ANXIETY OF CHILEANS RE
POSSIBILITY THAT, WITH OVERWHELMING PERUVIAN ADVANTAGE
IN TANKS AND AIRCRAFT, CHILEANS MIGHT BE VICTIMS OF
AGGRESSION FROM PERU. QUITE CLEAR THAT REASSURING
PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY POLITICAL AND MILITARY FIGURES ON
BOTH SIDES HAVE NOT HAD THE SLIGHTEST EFFECT ON UNDER-
LYING REALITIES OF SITUATION AS CHILEANS SEE THEM.
SINCE PERUVIANS POSSESS SUCH A CLEAR SUPERIORITY IN
GROUND FORCES, CHILEANS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE
THAT PERUVIANS WILL NOT SOON EXPLOIT IT. IN OTHER WORDS,
CAPABILITIES DO INFLUENCE INTENTIONS.

4. IN THIS CONTEXT, CHILEAN REACTION TO USG DELAY
IN RESPONDING TO THEIR DEMANDS FOR TOWS AND TANKS IS
ONE OF BEWILDERMENT AND DISMAY--UNDERNEATH WHICH, WE
SUSPECT, THERE MAY LURK SOME SUSPICION. CHILEANS POINT
OUT THAT WHAT THEY WANT IS MATERIEL FOR DEFENSIVE
PURPOSES ONLY. THEY NEVER TIRE OF REPEATING THAT
UNDER THE ALLENDE REGIME THE CHILEAN MILITARY
REFUSED TO ACCEPT SOVIET OFFERS OF THE SAME EQUIPMENT
PERUVIANS HAVE NOW RECEIVED. ARE THEY NOW TO BE PENALIZED
FOR THIS FORBEARANCE, THEY ASK? THEY HAVE ASKED GEN. MABRY
AND ME REPEATEDLY HOW USG CAN POSSIBLY REMAIN
PASSIVE, WHEN A PERUVIAN ATTACK AGAINST CHILE MOUNTED
WITH SOVIET WEAPONS AND ADVISERS COULD RESULT IN THE
IMPLANTATION OF A MARXIST STATE IN SOUTH AMERICA.

5. WE HAVE CONTINUED TO EXPLAIN TO CHILEANS THAT USG
IS ACTIVELY STUDYING THE PENDING CHILEAN REQUESTS.
WE HAVE STRESSED THE SHORTAGES OF MATERIEL AVAILABLE
FOR US ARMED FORCES AT THE MOMENT, THE NEEDS OF OTHER
FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, THE UNAVOIDABLE PRODUCTION DELAYS,
THE PROBLEM INVOLVED IN DISSEMINATING SOPHISTICATED
WEAPONS, AND THE COMPLICATIONS CREATED BY POLITICAL
CONTROVERSY REGARDING CHILE. WHILE THE CHILEANS LISTEN
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POLITELY, THEY ARE FAR FROM CONVINCED
BY OUR RATIONALE. HAVING LITTLE FAMILIARITY WITH THE
INTERNAL USG PROCEDURES IN THESE MATTERS, THEY FIND IT
HARD TO UNDERSTAND THE LONG DELAYS IN OUR RESPONSES,
DESPITE WHAT WE KEEP TELLING THEM.

6. I RECOGNIZE THE DIFFICULTIES STANDING IN THE WAY
OF ACTION AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT. AT SAME TIME,

HAVING WATCHED THIS SITUATION DEVELOP IN LAST FEW MONTHS, I BELIEVE CHILEAN FEELINGS HAVE REACHED SUCH A PITCH OF INTENSITY THAT WE STAND TO LOSE A GREAT DEAL LOCALLY IF WE DO NOT IN NEAR FUTURE GIVE THEM A DEFINITE WORD REGARDING AT LEAST TOWS AND M-48 TANKS. IF, AS I THINK IS THE CASE, USG AGENCIES CONCERNED NOW RECOGNIZE DANGERS TO SOUTH AMERICAN STABILITY PRESENTED BY PERUVIAN ARMS SUPERIORITY, I WOULD URGE THAT ACTION ON THE PACKAGE STATE AND DEFENSE ARE NOW CONSIDERING FOR THE CHILEAN BE EXPEDITED. OTHERWISE CHILEANS MAY SQUANDER THEIR EFFORTS AND MONEY ON DESPERATE ATTEMPTS TO PICK UP SCRAPS OF MATERIEL ON THE WORLD MARKET, AND THEY WILL CERTAINLY REPROACH US FOR LEAVING THEM IN LURCH AT A TIME OF NATIONAL PERIL -- AND BEGIN TO SHAPE THEIR ACTIONS ACCORDINGLY.

7. THE CASE FOR SUPPLYING KEY CHILEAN MILITARY NEEDS AT THIS TIME DOES NOT REST ON THE NATURE OF THE PRESENT CHILEAN REGIME. RATHER, IT IS BASED ON WHAT I BELIEVE IS THE SOUND PRINCIPLE THAT USG HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP PRESERVE PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE REGION.

8. AT PRESENT JUNCTURE WE CAN MAKE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THIS OBJECTIVE BY RESTORING A SUFFICIENT DEGREE OF BALANCE BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES OF CHILE AND THOSE OF PERU TO DISCOURAGE ANY ATTEMPT BY THE LATTER TO SEEK A QUICK MILITARY VICTORY. WHILE THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD REGARD ANY MILITARY AID TO THE CURRENT CHILEAN GOVERNMENT AS INIQUITOUS, AND WHO WOULD THEREFORE CRITICIZE ANY STEP WHICH WOULD RESULT IN MAKING ARMS AVAILABLE TO THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT FOR PURCHASE, I BELIEVE RESPONSIBLE OPINION IN US CAN BE CONVINCED THAT

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PURPOSE OF THIS EXERCISE IS NOT AT ALL TO SHORE UP GOC INTERNAL SECURITY, TO WHICH THESE WEAPONS WOULD MAKE LITTLE IF ANY CONTRIBUTION, BUT TO PRESEVE PEACE IN THE HEMISPHERE, FOR THE GENERAL ADVANTAGE.

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